GRAPHIC VISIONS no. 2 SEPTEMBER 1975

CIROCCO

GRAPHIC VISIONS

Editor/Publisher:
Chris Lomelino

Our cover: Captain America, Nick Fury, the Falcon and Redwing, as rendered by Dave Sim.

Interested in submitting something for publication in a future issue of GV? Check page 26 for contribution information.

BACK ISSUES

GV #1 is still available for 60¢. It features work by Neal Adams, Tim Conrad, Dan Adkins, Frank Cirocco, Rich Morrissey, Jay Zilber, and most everybody who's in this issue.

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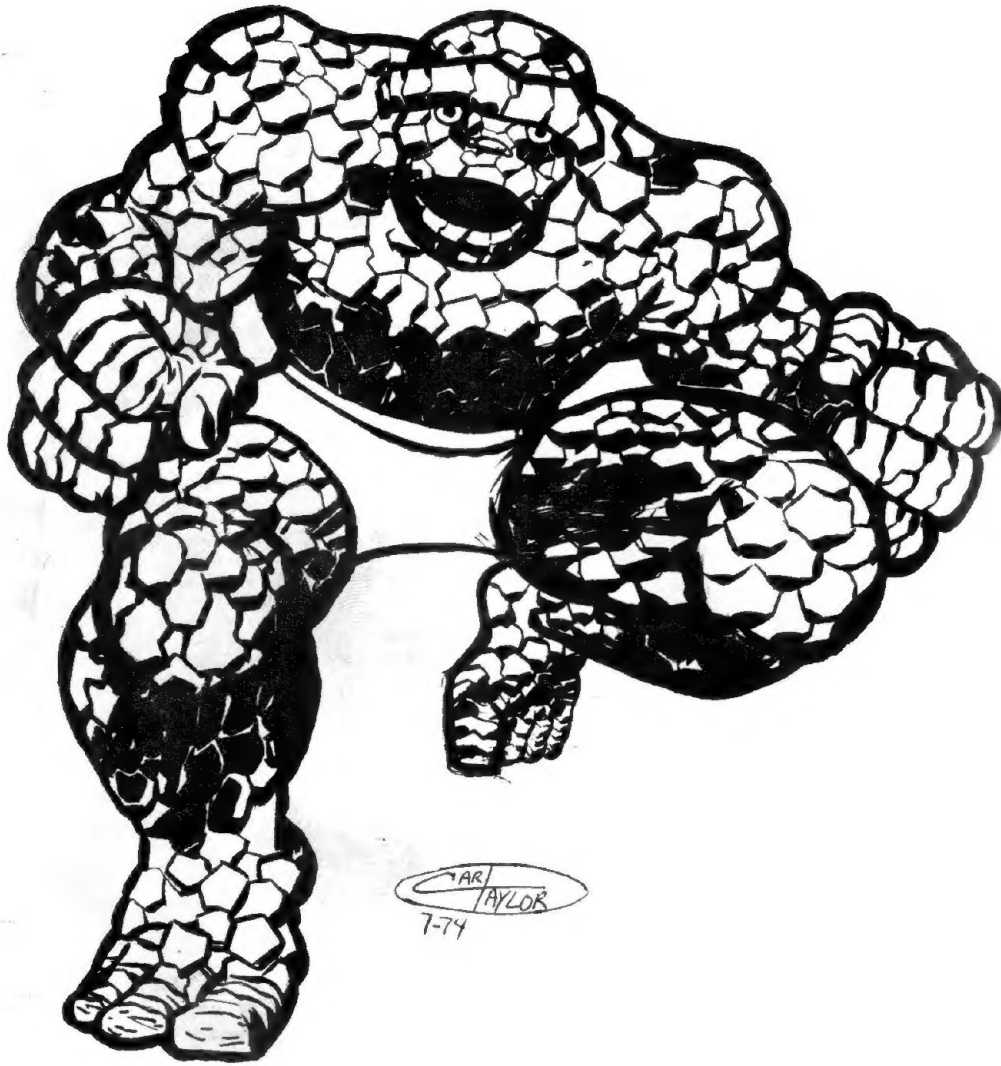

CARL TAYLOR
7-74

ONE LAST DESPERATE CHANCE

BY 'DOC' LARRY BANICKY

LOGIC AND CHARACTERIZATION SHOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH A GOOD FIGHT

More often as not once a fledgling writer or artist recieves some recognition for being a cut above average, the Marvel organization makes an offer for his talents. Len Wein's total move and Dick Giordano's partial change are just two recent examples of this fact. 'Defections' don't happen often. Kirby's switch to National a few years back pops immediately to mind. Today this phenomenon happens again as Gerry Conway takes over as writer-editor for DC.

Some fans may have panicked, but I for one breathed a sigh of relief. No more re-hashed old villains, paper-thin characters or soap opera relationships muddling up a series. But also no more of those "diamonds among garbage" as so graphically portrayed in a recent WARLOCK.

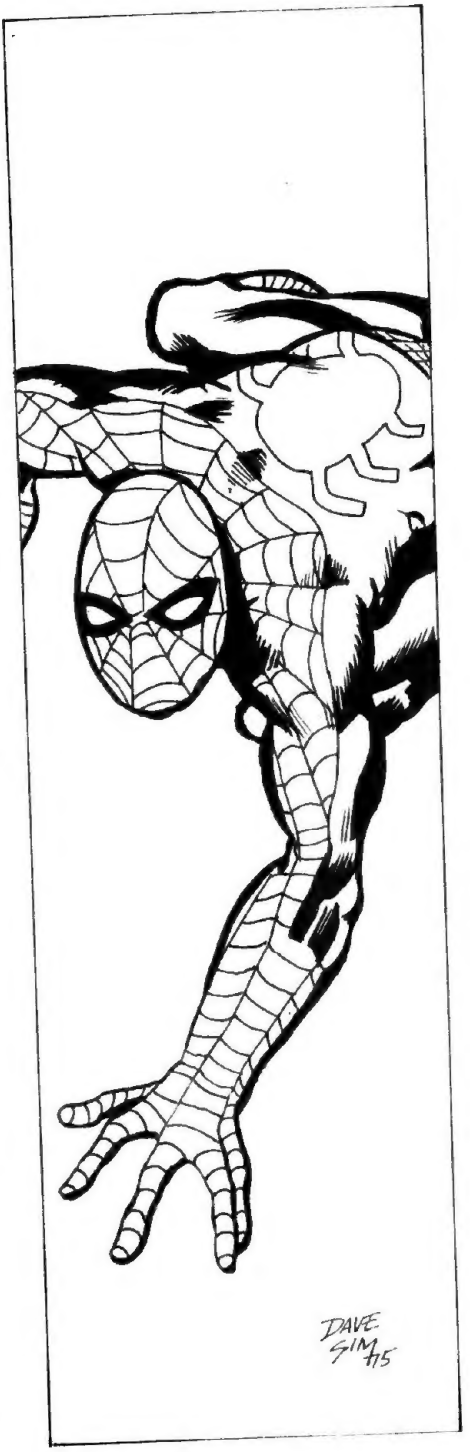
Conway's early work can be typified by his DAREDEVIL series, starting with #72. Who could forget Tagak, Lord of the Leopards, and his faithful leopard, Opar leaping out of a mirror to attack Horn-head? Apart from the silly plot and characters, this issue heralded the first of Conway's standard trademarks, death. In his career, supporting characters are mowed down in droves. This particular issue has Opar getting scrooched at the conclusion (mercifully a one-parter). Conway's affinity for street people gets its first airing here, culminating in Angar the Screamer and gradually mellowing in the pages of SPIDER-MAN and FANTASTIC FOUR.

Conway remained DD's scripter from issue 72 to 96, co-scripting #'s 97 and 98 with Steve Gerber and plotting #102. (Conway, Heck and Colletta produced #118 which is a good reason to consign it to the pits.) Early efforts involved multiple cross-overs with other heroes (Iron Man and Sub-Mariner) battling groups of villains (the Zodiac Gang, the Brotherhood of the Ankh) or mercenary villains answering to the main man (Mr. Kline). The Mr. Kline series points out a basic fault in Conway's early plots. An apparently mysterious and complex scheme is resolved with a "deus ex machina" or by an inadequate reason. Kline, for example, dies at the hands of two alien guardsmen. A bit of a letdown after the long build-up.

While this plot developed, the Black Widow was introduced as Daredevil's lady friend and partner, supposedly. Developement culminated to the point where the strip should have been re-titled "Macho-Devil and the Black Dyke". Finally, mercifully, the Widow went her way.

THOR and SPIDER-MAN followed DAREDEVIL as Conway's next regular series. With SPIDER-MAN the successful, top-selling formula was continued. Except for some nice bits between Peter and Mary Jane, characterization remained nil. The Doc Ock-Aunt May wedding needs no comment. And I suppose Gwen Stacy's death made the character interesting for a couple of issues. Her subsequent "resurrection", however, was not Conway's idea. The method, though, with Mssrs. Tarantula and Jackal cluttering up the background is pure Conway. Look how closely the "awful truth" behind the Jackal closely parallels the revelation of the Green Goblin in SPIDER-MAN #39.

I did mention some commendable work didn't I. THOR proved Conway's worth in some ways, but served to heighten his short-



comings in others. Skillfully blending science fiction with sword and sorcery, Thor's adventures really became galactic in scope. Even Mangog's return in The Well at the World's End-Ego Prime epic was palpable but not the final reason behind all the machinations. Another deus ex machina rearing its ugly head. Other gems include Loki's blindness in the Rutland issue (THOR #207), the Black Star Trilogy, Hercules' re-introduction as a supporting character and now the introduction of the Egyptian pantheon. THOR has to have been Conway's most consistent and best achievement.

When Conway dropped DAREDEVIL with issue #98 he assumed writing chores on the FANTASTIC FOUR (#133-152). In those stories we were treated not only to another Sub-Mariner epic, Doctor Doom's latest ploy, and Machismo, the Nuclear Man, but also the very fine Warhead nostalgia series (#135-137). Roy Thomas plotted this latter gem, though, which leaves Conway to take the rap for the others. The F.F. are clobbered in part one and bounce back in the conclusion. Ho-hum. I hope Sue <u>does</u> open that detective agency alluded to in one of Thomas' early issues. <u>That</u> would be different.

So much for this brief look at why Marvel is better off without Conway. Don't expect any great changes though. In a recent Chicago Tribune article Stan Lee was quoted as saying, "Twenty-five per cent of our readers are over 18...". Gerry Conway scripted SPIDER-MAN, MARVEL TEAM-UP, THOR, and the FANTASTIC FOUR, Marvel's top four sellers. Makes you wonder at the intelligence of those 18-year-olds, doesn't it?

Crackle borgward,
'Doc' Larry Brnicky

KURT SCHAFFENBERGER INTERVIEWED

by JOHN PIERCE

Anyone familiar with the Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen stories of the 1960's, and the Jimmy Olsen stories of the post-Kirby era, will need no introduction to the artwork of Kurt Schaffenberger. And fans whose memories go back to the comics of the 1940's will certainly remember his masterful treatments of Captain Marvel, Captain Marvel Jr., and Mary Marvel, singly and in the Marvel family strip itself. Only a few artists have had the privilege of working on two of the top names in the entire history of comics--Superman and Captain Marvel--and Kurt is a member of this group.

Not too long ago, Kurt's autobiography was presented in JIMMY OLSEN #155. Briefly it told of his birth on a small farm in the Thuringian Forest of central Germany, where he spent the first seven years of his life. "In preparation for my career as a cartoonist," Kurt says, "I tended geese, herded goats, and hoed potatoes." When his family migrated to the U.S., they settled first in Hartford, Connecticut, but moved to suburban West Hartford shortly thereafter. As a result of graduating first in his high school class, Kurt earned a scholarship, which he used to enter Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

On graduation, Kurt landed a job with Jack Binder (brother of comics' most prolific writer, Otto Binder) at his studio in Engelwood, New Jersey. The Binder studio turned out artwork on a production line basis for comic books (then a new field).

Exactly one year to the day after getting out of Pratt, Kurt was inducted into the US Army, where he spent the next four years, three of them in Europe. He went overseas with the 1st Special Service Company, which had the prime function of running shows, movies, sporting events, and other forms of entertainment for the troops in England. The posters that he prepared for these events brought him to the attention of a major who had run an art agency in civilian life and who was then in the process in initiating one for the army. For the next two years, they produced training posters, charts, graphs, and displays for the army "until the Battle of the Bulge made these activities seem somewhat superfluous", resulting in the disbanding of the unit.

Learning that an outfit called the Office of Strategic Services was looking for German-speaking personnel, Kurt joined the OSS and spent the next six months in Intelligence and counter-espionage work until his discharge as a Master Sergeant in 1945.

"Back in civilian life, I drifted naturally to the field I knew best--comics, working mainly for Fawcett Publications on the Captain Marvel series until it was halted in 1953. After that, I spent two years doing general artwork in a small studio, but I always kept one foot in the comic book field, drawing for such companies as Classics Illustrated, American Comics, Marvel Comics, and others.

"When National was looking for an artist for the Lois Lane magazine which was about to start, I applied for and got the job. I stayed with Lois until 1968 when I was assigned to the Supergirl book." (Kurt is referring to Supergirl's lead appearances in other comics, not to her own title, which has been a relatively recent developement. Kurt has stated on other occasions that, of the various characters he has worked on, Lois Lane is his favorite, because he took what had theretofore been a minor character from another strip and developed a personality which he felt was "distinctive and unique". He has no kind words for his work on Supergirl, however.)

Along with newsstand comics, Kurt has done quite a bit of work in the commercial comics field, primarily for Custom Comics. He has also done special books for diverse accounts such as General Motors, the New York Police and Fire Departments, the US Air Force, and many others.

In the sixties, Kurt developed the characters for the short-lived super-hero line of comics published by the American Comics Group. There were only two of these, Magicman and Nemesis. Except for some covers, he never actually drew the strips. It is doubtful that even Kurt's excellent artwork could have saved these two heroes from the oblivion which overtook them. (For about a year in 1971, Kurt also drew today's top-selling comic book character--none other than Archie Andrews himself).

'I found doing Archie refreshingly simple'

Kurt's family consists of his wife Dot, his son, a married daughter and a son-in-law, and two grandchildren.

One of the most unique panels Kurt ever did was the splash page for a story entitled "The Monkey's Paw" which appeared in LOIS LANE #42. In this panel, Superman is shown defeating several alien super-men in a dream sequence. On the ground behind Lois was none other than Captain Marvel himself. The costume was colored differently in the original printing; however, when National editor E. Nelson Bridwell (a Cap fan) selected the story for reprinting in LOIS LANE #104, he asked that the costume be colored in the authentic red and gold--which raised some eyebrows among readers!

Kurt was kind enough to answer the following questions for GRAPHIC VISIONS' readers:

GV: You mentioned that DC artists have not worked twice-up for about five years. What size is currently used?

Kurt: For the past six or more years we have been working in a 10 inch by 15 inch size instead of the 12 inch by 18 inch that we did previously. This applies not only to DC, but to every other comics company.

GV: Is original art still done on bristol board?

Kurt: I have always worked on a 2 ply, kid finish Bainbridge bristol. Now, however, DC supplies its own paper and, I have noticed, the brand and quality seems to vary from time to time--not to the point, however, that it creates a problem.

GV: Do you have any special method of laying out a page?

Kurt: Generally I will draw a small, quick thumb-nail sketch to work out the best layout for a page. This gives me a general overall view of what the page will look like when completed.

GV: Did you find your work on Archie in 1971 more difficult or less difficult than super-hero work?

Kurt: I found doing Archie refreshingly simple compared to the exacting realism demanded by the Superman line or romance or mystery stories. I would describe my favorite and natural style as a sort of caricatured realism.

GV: Did you work directly with Allen Hartley on Archie? (Note: Allen Hartley is both a writer and an artist on the Archie staff.)

Kurt: At Archie I worked directly with Dick Goldwater or his assistant, Victor Gorelick (spelling?).

GV: Do you spend more time on your commercial artwork or on comic book assignments?

Kurt: I would say that on the average, newsstand comics take up about 2/3 of my time. I generally try to maintain this balance, as I consider comics my basic bread-and-butter income and more definitely scheduled than commercial or illustration work, which is far more unpredictable, although more remunerative.

GV: Now that JIMMY OLSEN has been turned into the SUPERMAN FAMILY bi-monthly, with new Jimmy Olsen stories every third issue (alternating with Lois Lane and Supergirl), will you be doing JO art only twice a year?

Kurt: As the scheduling stands right now, I will be doing four Jimmy Olsen stories per year for a total of 40 pages. The rest of the time I will be working on the Shazam line, and Superman stories on occasion. (Interviewer's note: Some Superman stories have featured Kurt's inks over Curt Swan's pencils.)

GV: I notice that some of the Superman stories of the 1960's in which Lois Lane and Lana Lang had big parts, were done primarily by another artist (such as Curt Swan), but that you did the figures of Lois and Lana. Was this because your version of them was so popular?

Kurt: Whenever this happened, I did it at Mort Weisinger's request, as he wanted to keep Lois more uniform throughout the Superman series, and he wanted my version to be the criterion.

GV: Did you draw your figures before or after the other artist in these cases?

Kurt: It varied. Sometimes I would do the drawing from scratch, other times I

would have to paste over their drawings and redo them completely.

GV: During what time did you work on Captain America?

Kurt: My work on Captain America was confined to inking four or five stories in early 1946.

GV: How did you feel about accepting the Captain Marvel assignment? Did you know the circumstances behind C.C. Beck's "dismissal"?

Kurt: I was very happy to be working on the "Big Red Cheese" again after an absence of 20 years. I have always had a soft spot in my heart for the Marvels, although they did leave me high and dry back in 1953. As to Beck's "dismissal", all I know is what I read in the fan magazines. The only thing that Carmine Infantino and Julie Schwartz told me was that Beck was becoming too demanding in regards to control of SHAZAM! and that he had been rejecting scripts. As to Beck's side of the story, I can add nothing, as I haven't seen or spoken to him in over ten years.

GV: In the Marvel Family story in SHAZAM! #11, you drew Captain Marvel landing a punch on Sivana's jaw--something Beck would never do. Was anything mentioned about this?

Kurt: I was not aware that having Captain Marvel landing a punch on Sivana's jaw was a "no-no". I'm willing to swear that over the years of their antagonisms both Beck and I have had Sivana's jaw belted more than a few times by Cap as well as various other Marvels. (Interviewer's note: According to the HISTORY OF COMICS, Vol. II, C.C. Beck was a sort of unofficial editor of the Capt. Marvel stories at Fawcett in the past, and as such he carefully edited scenes of violence, so that the reader never actually saw Cap's fist hitting an opponent, but only the before and/or after of a punch. Whether any punches were ever shown landing on a jaw is not known to this interviewer. Also it is not known if Beck actually "edited" any of the stories drawn by Kurt in his capacity as a free-lancer. Kurt's solo stories of the Big Red Cheese appeared in WHIZ COMICS.)

GV: In the 1940's, did you do any solo stories for Captain Marvel Jr. and/or Mary Marvel?

Kurt: As a matter of fact, I was drawing Junior for several years in both MASTER COMICS and CAPT. MARVEL JR. comics before I drew Captain Marvel or the Marvel Family book. As for Mary, I do recall pencilling some scripts for Jack Binder, but I don't believe I ever did any stories that were exclusively Mary Marvel.

GV: Do you remember what your first Fawcett assignment was?

Kurt: When I first entered the Jack Binder Studio in '41, I seem to recall that doing backgrounds for a Captain Marvel story was the very first job that I worked on. After my discharge from the army in '45, the first assignment at Fawcett's that I landed was doing Ibis. (Interviewer's note: See DETECTIVE COMICS #441 for a reprint of one Mr. Schaffenberger's Ibis tales.)

GV: Did you ever do anything other than covers for the late American Comics Group?

'I was happy to be working on the Big Red Cheese again'

TO JOHN PIERCE--
SINCERE BEST WISHES
AND MANY THANKS FOR
YOUR SUPPORT.
Schaffenberger

Kurt: Yes, I did adventure, romance and mystery stories for A.C.G. from '55 to '57 when I landed the Lois Lane account. After that I did only covers until they folded their newsstand line about five years ago. However, I am still working for the organization in one of their other departments, namely Custom Comics. (Interviewer's note: It was for the American Comics Group that Mr. Schaffenberger developed the appearances of, but did not draw in strips, the aforementioned costumed supernatural heroes, Magicman and Nemesis. They were done under the name of his maternal grandfather, Lou Wahle.)

GV: Have you ever drawn Superboy stories?

Kurt: Not a Superboy story per se, although he did appear in some Lois Lane stories. As a matter of fact, I recall that he even appeared on one Lois Lane cover I did.

GV: Outside of Lois Lane, of all the characters or strips you've done, do you have a special favorite?

Kurt: Other than Lois Lane, one character is about the same as another to me. They all involve a great deal of time and effort which, when broken down on an hourly basis, afford me about the same salary as a competent (or even not-so-competent) plumber.

GV: Do you feel that your style has changed any over the years, say, between 1949 and now?

Kurt: I don't think my style has basically changed, but I sincerely hope that I have gotten better in that time. If I haven't, I think it's time I starting looking around for a good location on which to open a hamburger (or schaffenberger) stand.

GV: What is your favorite, or best-remembered, unusual experience in the field of comics, from any time in your career?

Kurt: Strangely enough, comics is not a very funny business. However, my wife's favorite story concerns my son when he was about 12 years old and a flaming car-nut. He had been helping(?) an older teenage youngster work on his car several streets away from home, and during their conversations had mentioned that I drew Superman for a living. One warm, windy summer afternoon, I was on the roof of my two-story house checking the chimney. My shirt was open and billowing out behind me just as the other lad drove my son up in front of the house. He looked at me for a while with his mouth open, then turned to my son and said, "Does your dad always stand up there like that?"

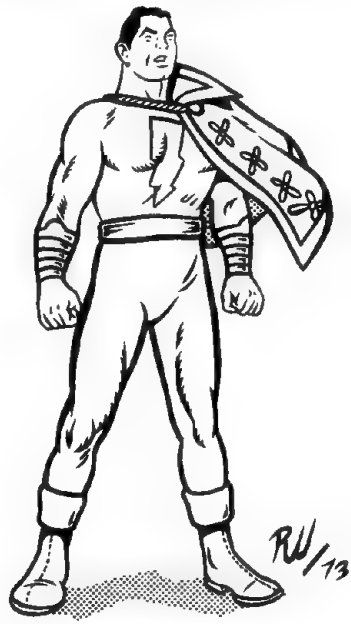
That concludes my interview with Kurt P. Schaffenberger, commercial artist and delineator of super-heroes. However, I did want to share one of Kurt's comments to me.

"Dear John,

Many thanks for your letter and the kind remarks in it. After having worked for so many years without ever recieving any kind of recognition, it is extremely gratifying to know that there are people out there who are paying attention."

Let me close with some purely subjective remarks on the subject. There are some artists in comicdom who (regardless of the level of their talent) wouldn't give fans the time of day. But then there are also men like Kurt Schaffenberger, who in addition to being a top-notch illustrator, is also a great guy. People who knew him had told me this earlier. Now that I've had contact with him, I can confirm the fact.

His artwork can take its rightful place alongside other greats of the comic field. Be it Captain Marvel or Superman, Junior or Jimmy Olsen, Kurt can and has drawn them ever so well, displaying not only fine form but great versatility as well. Mr. Schaffenberger, we, the fans of Captain Marvel and his Family, and Superman and his family, salute you.



Anyone familiar with the Doc Savage stories (which first appeared in the pulps, but are now available in paperback) should really enjoy this. Uncle Dave McDonnell not only lampoons the Man of Bronze and his band of aides, but also takes a poke at the writing style of Kenneth Robeson (real name: Lester Dent) in the process. This is part one of a four to six parter (depending on the story's final length) and as Dave put it, "It's merely a beginning...I was concentrating on building suspense... establishing the mystery." The complete story will be serialized in GV over the next few issues--be sure to be here! And now.....

DISEASED MINDS INC. present, in all good taste, part one of a

Doc Garbage

ADVENTURE

by DAVE McDONNELL

THE DEVIL'S LAUNDROMAT

Nothing worked right there. The washing machines had a tendency to let any clothes stuffed in the barrel remain dirty. The dryers roasted their victims, sometimes setting them on fire or shrinking them insanely.

The iron and ironing board the management had set up in the corner for the convenience of its patrons never ironed properly. The iron put more creases in the clothes than they had in the first place. The board itself often fell on patrons' legs with a force sufficient to amputate.

Everything else in the corner laundromat on Chester Street in Di Giorgio, New Jersey didn't work quite right either. And there was the smell of the place--a hot, sulphury stench that seemed to bellow from the last dryer on the end of the wall.

William Harper Widdlecomode, ace archeologist, geoligist, and number one consumer of extremely-substantial-locution, hadn't heard about the Chester Street Laundromat's bad reputation. He didn't know about the odors or the poorly-working machinery.

He wheeled into the laundromat with a basket of old archeological safari khaki, punched all the right buttons, and settled down to waiting while his wearing washed.

His monocles astride his angular nose, Widdlecomode studied a geological monograph in the pages of GEOLOGY QUATERLY. His attention was diverted momentarily from the periodical by a trio of strange sounds. Widdlecomode, or "Commie" as he was called by his friends, looked up. There was nobody else in the laundromat. Nobody else was there to make the very strange sounds. Commie turned back to his magazine.

A few moments later, the sounds came louder, shrieks, unholy screams of pure terror, and an insane cackling.

William Harper Widdlecomode's eyes widened appreciably.

The sounds were coming from the back of the laundromat.

He quietly dropped the geology publication on the seat beside him and sprang to the back of the store.

There was nothing back there, nothing living.

Just a few buckets, a dry mop, and shivering shadows.

Commie, who also toiled as one of Kook Garbage, Jr.'s five aides, returned to his seat and his journal. Commie had always been a good friend of Kook Garbage, Jr., "The Man of Tan" who was known to the world-at-large as Doc Garbage, superman extraordinaire, righter of wrongs, solver of mysteries, part-time bridge champion. Together, Commie, Doc, and Doc's four other expert aides had roamed the world performing heroic feats of mammoth proportion and spending a fortune on booze and broads.

Doc Garbage was currently meditating at his Fortress of Longitude, the most complete laboratory-library-penny arcade-game emporium in the world, in the cold, wintry Artic. While he was away, his aides pursued their own lives.

That was what Commie was doing, pursuing geological research in the ruins of a New Jersey shopping center, living out of a suitcase in Di Giorgio, New Jersey, and now doing his very khaki laundry in Di Giorgio's Chester Street Laundromat.

He leafed through GEOLOGY QUARTERLY in search of another interesting article. He found one by Carolyn Keene on page 93 and began reading.

The sounds came again, much louder than before and definitely from the back of the store. Commie jumped from his seat and bounded to the rear. As before, there was nothing there.

A chill rose quietly up his spine, turned at the left nerve cord, and hit his brain with alarm.

"This phenomena definitely bears careful perusal and investigation," Commie announced to himself. He never used small words except when he was drunk. That was most of the time. Given the chance, Commie could get drunk on Ovaltine.

The scream rose again. The boney, weird-looking geologist-anthropologist-paleontologist looked around warily.

The last dryer in the end of the wall was steaming tremendously. Its door creaked open. Cautiously, he approached the dryer. He could hear the screams inside, piercing, shattering screams.

Ugly, sulphorous clouds of smoke belched forth from the dryer. Commie coughed, bent over, and peered into the dryer's vaporous depths.

Then, William Harper Widdlecomode screamed.

They found a very-charred body in the laundromat the next day. Upon examination of the wallet on the body, Doc Garbage was duly notified.

Part Two, next ish!!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (otherwise known as:

Kicks, Quips, & Comments

Dear Chris and gang-

Brace yourselves, 'cause this is going to be a long letter, as I like Graphic Visions!

Most of the art is par or above for the small 'zine scene. Artis turned in a great cover, especially since you said it was his first brushwork. Gary Phillips' work was interesting, but that's all. Mosher, Lankford, Patterson, Dave Sim, Van Vlack and Wes Smith turned poor to fair artwork, with Lankford's Frazetta swipe at the bottom and Patterson's girl at the top. Geez, one thing I can't stand is swipes. Onoda turned out some good stuff-I liked his Red Sonja on page 11. It was nice and clean. Cirocco's work usually thrills me, but his contributions in your 'zine were just good. They were probably much better in their original state as you said. I've saved the best for last. Carl Taylor, the Neal Adams-Tim Conrad (like that guy) collaboration, and the Adkins centerspread. Carl has always impressed me as someone who's gonna go pro soon. After all, Gil Kane's about the only pro left to model after. The best work of the issue was the Adams-Conrad illo on page 22. I feel this should have been the centerspread, other than the Adkins barbarian (it don't look like the Conan I'm familiar with.)

Now fer de articles. Chris, I always enjoy editorials, and yours was no exeption. KBP was good, and I'd like to see that facet of the 'zine expanded. Jay Zilber wrote an interesting Update. Although I found his column quite entertaining, I disagreed with him at almost every turn. In Mike Dobbs' Atlas article, I again disagreed alot with the writer. I liked Pheonix, especially the issue with that "Dark Avenger" backup. I love Ernie Colon's artwork, and I also enjoy Planet of the Vampires. Hell, maybe I'm just peculiar. I hope you keep "On the Market" in your 'zine, as a review column of this sort is really needed in fandom. I totally disagree with the guys concerning CPL though, I think it's one of the finest fanzines going today. Rod Snyder's "Space Filers" was enjoyable to me, since I always like articles that ramble on with almost no goal in mind, but touching alot. The Phantom Stranger filler by Morrissey was thorough, but a trifle boring at times. I loved Aparo's art- I always thot he was grossly underrated in fandom. Taloac is a good draftsman, but no rival to Aparo.

Boy, that was two long paragraphs! I'm sorry this critique ran so long, but I've always been long-winded in letters of comment. Lemme tell ya, I do look forward to a Graphic Visions number two, if there is one.

Sincerely,

Ken Meyer Jr.
3110B Revere Circle
Hill AFB, Utah 84406

I wish everyone was so long-winded! That's about all the room we have for letters thish, hopefully there'll be an expanded lettercol next issue. Many thanks to all those who took the time to drop me a line, its greatly appreciated.

JIM SOMA

RW.15

Compliments of your friendly neighborhood

Spider-man!

By CHRIS LOMELINO and LARRY LANKFORD

* * *INTRODUCTION* * *

Its fairly common knowledge that Spider-man first breathed "life" in AMAZING FANTASY #15, in an eleven page story by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko. From that fateful encounter with a radiation-contaminated spider, Peter Parker was to go through numerous trials and tribulations (including the deaths of many of those close to him) on his way to super-stardom and becoming one of the top-selling characters of his time (he's currently carrying three books featuring original stories; his own book, MARVEL TEAM-UP, and SPIDEY SUPER STORIES as well as two reprint titles; MARVEL TALES and a $1.50 SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN book).

Contrary to popular belief, Spider-man was not the creation of Stan Lee and Steve Ditko, but the brainchild of the most famous super-hero artist of them all--Jack Kirby. Apparently Kirby created the character for a rival company which soon folded, so he presented the idea to Lee and Marvel. On seperate occasions(after Steve Ditko had left the strip), both Lee and Kirby himself had said that Jack was the character's original creator.

Even though he was not Spidey's creator, Steve Ditko was certainly one of the reasons he became so popular. Ditko was the wall-crawler's artistic guiding light for nearly four and one-half years (through issue #38, when he left Marvel due to disagreements over how the character--Spider-man--was being handled). His work on the book included many of its landmark issues. With issue #25, he was listed in the credits as the plotter(though he had probably had a lot to do with the book's previous plots, too). Of the books he was credited as plotting were possibly two of the top Spidey stories ever printed; the Green Goblin/Crime-Master saga (in issues #26 and 27) and the Master Planner/ Doc Ock series (in #'s 30-33), as well as Peter's graduation and countless others.

Ditko, whose forte was drawing the "everyday common man on the street", protrayed the web-spinner in action as no one before or since has (though Gil Kane came close--by using many Ditko poses). It wasn't rare for Ditko to use 8 or 9 panels per page, thus getting in more story than most other artists were capable of. And his talent for layout and design were unbelievable. If he had one weakness, it was the seeming inability to draw beautiful, sexy women (case in point: compare Ditko's rendering of Gwen Stacy to John Romita's). But that's but a small point, in a comic book the emphasis is on the action--and in that Ditko has few equals.

Following is an index to AMAZING FANTASY #15, SPIDER-MAN #'s 1-38, and the first two SPIDER-MAN ANNUALS, all of which contain work by Steve Ditko.

* * * INDEX* * *

The entries in the index are listed in the following manner:

ISSUE #/ STORY TITLE/ # of pgs./ DATE
CREDITS: Writer--Artist--Cover artist(s)
SYNOPSIS

AMAZING FANTASY

15 /"Spider-man" / 11/ Aug.'62
Stan Lee Steve Ditko Kirby/Ditko
The death of Ben Parker, Spidey on TV, and the famous closing line.... "With great power must also come great responsiblity." are all featured in this issue.

* * *

SPIDER-MAN

1 /"Spider-man" / 14/ Mar. '63
Lee Ditko Ditko
Introduces JJJ and his son John.
Second story:
1 /"Spider-man vs. The Chameleon"/ 10
Spidey tries to join the FF, Chameleon tries to frame him.

2 /"Duel To The Death With The Vulture" / 14/ May '63
Lee Ditko Ditko
Pete sells photos to Jameson for the first time. He defeats the Vulture with a device he constructed called a Anti-magnetic inverter.
Second story:
2 /"The Uncanny Threat of The Terrible Tinkerer" /10 /
Tinkerer turns out to be a disguised alien bent on taking over the earth.

3 /"Doctor Octopus" / 21/ July '63
Lee Ditko Ditko
Featuring the origin of Doc Ock, who Spidey defeats with the help of another of his scientific devices. Cameo appearances by the Human Torch.

4 /"Nothing Can Stop The Sandman"/ 21/ Sept. '63
Lee Ditko Ditko
The Sandman battles the web-slinger in Midtown High! Spider-man coats JJJ's chair with web fluid and the unknowing Jameson sits in it. He is, of course, immediately stuck to his chair. Also the first appearance of Betty Brant.

5 /"Marked For Destruction By Dr. Doom" / 21/ Oct. '63
Lee Ditko Ditko
The first monthly issue featured: Dr Doom capturing Flash Thompson (who had dressed in a Spider-man costume to scare "puny" Parker) thinking he was the real Spidey. Spider-man fights Doom until the FF arrive and both Doom and the web-head take off--in different directions.

6 /"Face-To-Face With The Lizard"/ 21 / Nov. '63
Lee Ditko Ditko
Spider-man stops a robbery in a museum, saving Liz Allan in the process, and she developes a 'crush' on him. JJJ and Parker go to Florida to find Lizard. Thanks to a serum developed by scientific whiz kid Parker, Curt Connors again returns to his human form. We see some more of Batty Brant in this issue.

7 /"The Return Of The Vulture"/ 21/ Dec. '63
Lee Ditko Ditko
The Vulture tries to rob Jameson and the Bugle. Spidey and the Vulture tangle in the Bugle office building. After the Vulture has been defeated, the wall-crawler webs Jameson's mouth shut "to keep him quiet for an hour or so." The Brant/Parker relationship developing a little more rapidly.

8 /"The Terrible Threat Of The Living Brain"/ 17/ Jan. '64
Lee Ditko Ditko
Featuring a computer that may have the ability to figure out Spider-man's identity(Parker worked his way out of this one), Flash Thompson vs. Parker in a boxing ring, Spidey vs. the Living Brain (which ran amok when two workmen tried to steal it) in the confines of Midtown High, and to top it all off at the end of the story Pete has the other kids believing that Flash is the web-head's alter ego.
Second story:
8 /"Spider-man Tackles The Torch"/ 6/
Lee Kirby-Ditko
Spidey visits the Torch, and they have a short fight which is broken up by the FF.

9 /"The Man Called Electro"/ 22/ Feb. '64
Lee Ditko Ditko
The Brant/Parker relationship advances some more. Aunt May has to go to the hospital, and for once Flash actually feels sorry for Pete(!). Spider-man defeats Electro by 'short-circuiting' him with a waterhose. Earlier Pete had sold JJJ some fake photos(he needed money to pay Aunt May's doctor), so he gave(!) him actual photos of his battle with Electro.

10 /"The Enforcers"/ 22/ March '64
Lee Ditko Kirby/Ditko
Spidey defeats the Enforcers and

sends "Big Man" to prison with them. Big Man is Frederick Foswell who would turn up later in the wall-crawler's career. Its revealed that JJJ hates Spider-man because of jealousy(!)

11 /"Turning Point"/ 21/ April '64
Lee Ditko Ditko

Doc Ock is released from prison and Betty Brant is mixed up in a plan for Doc Ock to assist Blackie Gaxton escape from jail...in Philadelphia. Pete gets permission from Aunt May to go to Philly "to visit the historical sites". While Spidey is battling Gaxton and his gang, Betty's brother, Bennet is killed by some stray shots. Web-head and Doc Ock battle on a boat that's out of control and no decision is reached....and Doc Ock escapes. In this tale, super-science nut Parker developes his famed Spidey tracer and uses it for the first time.

12 /"Unmasked By Doctor Octopus"/ 22/ May '64
Lee Ditko Ditko

Doc Ock returns in search of revenge. Kidnaps Betty Brant in order to get Spidey to fight. Even though Pete is ill he fights Ock anyway and is easily defeated. And subsequently is unmasked....but everyone thinks that Peter Parker just dressed up as Spidey in order to rescue Betty. Liz Allan starts falling for Pete (or as she calls him, "Petey"). There are some nice touches to this issue too—like a sign that says Leedit Inc., JJJ getting soaked while watching the Ock/Spidey battle, and Betty Brant's new hairstyle.

13 /"The Menace Of Mysterio"/ 22/ June '64
Lee Ditko Ditko

Mysterio frames Spider-man, causing the public to think he's a thief. JJJ gives Mysterio support through the Daily Bugle(thinking he's legit). Spider-man and Mysterio battle atop the Brooklyn Bridge and on the set of a SF movie. Liz Allan gets a new hairdo.

14 /"The Grotesque Adventure Of The Green Goblin/ 22/ July '64
Lee Ditko Ditko

The Green Goblin(he wasn't a villain yet—it was just his first appearance) convinces Spidey to sign on to make a movie. Spider-man thinks they'll be using fake villains, but soon learns (not soon enough, as it turns out) that they are using real villains—the Goblin himself, and the Enforcers (remember them from issue #10?). The Hulk makes an appearance also....he goes after Spidey, until the old wall crawler manages to lose him. Alas, the movie is never made (and so Spidey doesn't get paid), and Pete ends up riding a bus home to New York. And back home, Liz and Flash argue, and Betty becomes jealous of Liz. We never find out who the Green Goblin is. The man who was going to be the producer of Spidey's movie, B.J. Cosmos, gave Lee and Ditko a chance to lampoon Hollywood.

15 /"Kraven, The Hunter"/ 22/ Aug. '64
Lee Ditko Ditko

The Chameleon (who first ran into Spidey in issue #1) brings Kraven to America to hunt down Spider-man. JJJ backs Kraven. A triangle betwixt Betty, Pete and Liz is developing. Aunt May arranges for Peter to have a blind date with a certain Ms. Watson. but it has to be called off at the last minute, much to Pete's relief (he didn't know what he was missing).

16 /"Duel With Daredevil"/ 22/ Sept. '64
Lee Ditko Ditko

Spider-man saves blind lawyer Matt murdock from getting mugged and then performs at a circus for charity, but Spidey and everyons attending the circus (except for Mr. Murdock) are hypnotized by the Ringmaster. DD fights a hypnotized Spidey briefly,then manages to unhypnotize (or de-hypnotize, or whatever, you get the idea, right?)him. Spider-man then proceeds to wipe the place up with the Ringmaster and his Circus of Crime and then release everyone else from their hypnosis. Betty's mad at Pete again (Lee must have been in a rut!) and Aunt May continues to nag Pete about seeing that"nice Mary Jane girl".

17 /"The Return Of The Green Goblin"/ 22/ Oct. '64
Lee Ditko Ditko

Flash Thompson organizes a Spider-man fan club and Spidey shows up at the first meeting....but so does the Goblin. Spider-man, upon hearing that Aunt May had been taken to the hospital, leaves. And everyone thinks that he ran from the Goblin. Johnny Storm, who had been in the audience, then ran the Goblin off. Betty is more jealous of Liz than ever, thanks to events in this ish.

18 /"The End Of Spider-man"/ 22/ Nov. '64
Lee Ditko Ditko

Spidey runs from the Sandman and from then on everything goes downhill. JJJ gloats and Betty goes out with another guy (Ned Leeds). In order to raise money to buy Aunt May some medicine, Spidey tries to sell the patent on his web fluid and his likeness for gum cards, but is turned down. The Torch tries to contact Spidey, but Pete can't answer 'cause he has to stay with his aunt. Flash Thompson dresses as Spidey—convinced that if he gets into trouble Spidey will save him, but as some crooks are beating him (Flash)

up, some cops save him. But then Aunt May gets well and Spidey comes back with a vengeance. In this issue, there is no actual fight with a villain!!!

19 /"Spidey Strikes Back"/ 22/ Dec. '64
Lee Ditko Ditko

The Sandman and the Enforcers kidnap the Torch and Spidey rescues him. Then they both defeat the Sandman and his mob. There is now a Leeds/Brant/Parker love triangle. On the humorous side, while fighting the Sandman and his mob, Spidey and the Torch get tangled in the wall crawler's web.

20 /"The Coming Of The Scorpion"/ 20/ Jan. '65
Lee Ditko Ditko

Ned Leeds has to go to Europe on an assignment. JJJ creates the Scorpion (with the help of a scientist, natch). The Scorpion turns against him (Jolly Jonah's very own Frankenstein) and Spidey saves him. At the end Pete is re-sewing his costume--as he put it, sewing was worse than fighting Doc Ock.

21 /"Where Flies The Beetle"/ 20/ Feb. '65
Lee Ditko Ditko

Peter Parker and Doris Evans (the, then,girl friend of Johnny Storm) become friends. The Torch gets jealous of Peter Parker. Spidey and the Torch fight, then team up and beat the Beetle.

22 /"The Clown And His Masters Of Menace" / 20/ March '65
Lee Ditko Ditko

The Circus of Crime get rid of the Ringmaster and change their name to the Masters of Menace. Betty and Pete go to an art display paid for by JJJ. And while they're there, the Masters of Menace rob the place, injuring Jameson in the process. After defeating the villains and returning home, Aunt May gets mad because Pete was out late and didn't call to let her know where he was.

23 /"The Goblin And The Gangsters"/ 20/ April '65
Lee Ditko Ditko

Pete has to leave his Spidey costume at home because he washed it and it was still wet. The Green Goblin tries to take over the city's mobs. Spidey gets tricked into fighting the mobs for the Goblin. In the middle of a fight with some mobsters, Spidey slips away and calls Aunt May to tell her he'll be late getting home. He then returns and captures the mobsters (would he be Spider-man if he didn't?). Parker gets suspicious of Foswell--whom he sent to prison in #10--and whom now works for JJJ.

24 /"Spider-man Goes Mad"/ 20/ May '65
Lee Ditko Ditko

Mysterio returns (sans costume) disguised as a psychiatrist and convinces Spidey he's going crazy. Just as he is about to unmask him, JJJ and Flash burst into the room (Flash had been following Jameson, telling him to get off of Spidey's back), and Spidey defeats Mysterio.

25 /"Captured By J. Jonah Jameson"/ 20/ June '65
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko, as well)

Dr. Smythe , JJJ, and his robot track down Spidey. The amazing web spinner defeats it by simply shutting it off (good thing Pete was such a science expert or Spidey would have bitten the dust long ago). Liz and Betty see Mary Jane--fuel for jealousy (we readers don't get to see her however). At the end of story Spider-man is a hero without a costume. He had left his costume back with the robot--holding it together with web fluid, so J.Jonah would think he had captured the ol' web-head. He left it thinking he had another costume at home, but Aunt May had found it and disposed of it.

26 /"The Man In The Crime Master's Mask" / 20/ July '65
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)

The Crime Master and the Green Goblin plan to take over the underworld together but the Crime Master double-crossed his partner in crime and decides to become the sole controller. Spidey has to wear a store-boughten costume and holds it together with webbing (which helps keep his secret identity a secret, as it turns out). Frederick Foswell becomes Patch,the stoolie,for the first time. Pete gets in a fight at school with Flash and the whole gang. At the end, the Goblin captures Spidey.

27 /"Bring Back My Goblin To Me"/ 20/ Aug. '65
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)

Part II(continued from last iah). Goblin shows all the gangsters how he captured Spider-man so they throw their support to him instead of the Crime Master. Green Goblin and Crime Master escape though while Spidey and three cops arrest all the mobsters there. The Crime Master is eventually killed in an exchange of gun-fire with the police. He was revealed to be an obscure gang leader named Nick "lucky" Lewis. Pete decides to sell his pics to a rival paper this time but the publisher there is too nosy. At the end of the story he starts sewing himself a new uniform.

28 /"The Menace Of The Molten Man"/ 20/ Sept. '65
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)

Pete graduates from high school. He wins a science scholarship to E.S.U. Liz Allan leaves the strip. Jolly Jonah

SNIK!
-O'NEILL-

speaks at Pete's graduation and afterword "butters up" Aunt May (remember Pete sold his pics to a rival paper last time). Spider-man recovers his costume from Smythe--the one he had left behind in issue #25. We are treated to Molten Man's origin and his defeat, later, at the hands of everybody's friendly neighborhood web-slinger.

29 /"Never Step On A Scorpion"/ 20/ Oct. '65
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)
The Scorpion escapes from prison and comes after Jameson and Spider-man. Ned Leeds returns from Europe. Betty Brant is in shock after the Scorpion/ Spidey battle that took place in the Bugle offices.

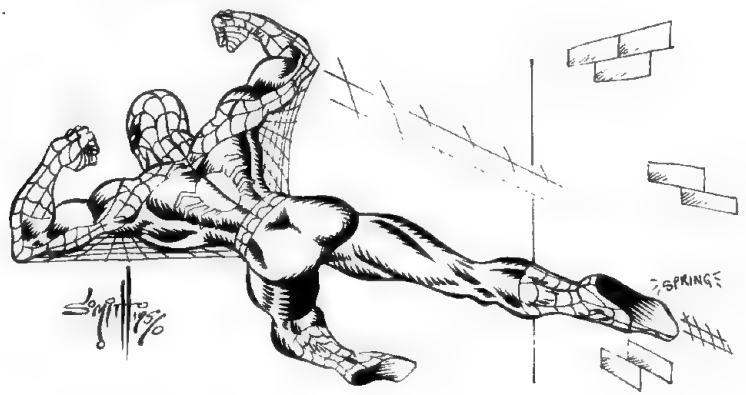
30 /"The Claws Of The Cat"/ 20/ Nov. '65
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)
JJJ is robbed by a cat burgular and offers a reward for his capture. Spidey tries to catch him but the police beat him to it. Liz Allan returns for five panels (she was gone for good this time... till Conway became writer anyway). Leeds asks Betty to marry him--she doesn't give her an answer.

31 /"If This Be My Destiny"/ 20/ Dec. '65
Lee Ditko Ditko
Another clash with the henchman of the Master Planner (he met them for the first time last ish). Pete registers for college and attends his first day. New characters introduced in this issue include Gwen Stacy and Harry Osborne. Aunt May has to go into hospital again, the doctors say she's close to death.

32 /"Man On A Rampage"/ 20/ Jan. '66
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)
We find out that the Master Planner is none other than Doc Ock, himself. Leeds and Parker get into a shoving match. Pete learns his Aunt is dying. As Spider-man he contacts Dr. Curtis Connors, to help him search for an antidote. They need a rare serum called 150-36. Connors orders it--to pay for it Pete hocks all his lab equipment (his microscope, etc.--wasn't that the same microscope given him by Uncle Ben in AF #15?). Doc Ock's men steal the 150-36 before it can be brought to Connors. Spidey goes on a rampage against the underworld, trying to find out where the Master Planner is. He truly fights as never before. He finally finds the Master Planner's lair, fights his way through the henchmen, and then comes upon the Master Planner himself--Doc Ock. Spider-man fights more savagely then ever before and defeats Doc Ock easily. The story closes with the wall-crawler trapped under a huge piece of machinery--the 150-36 just out of reach, with a hole in the ceiling of Ock's under-water sanctuary slowly growing larger, threatening to let the Hudson River come cascading in on our hero.

33 /"The Final Chapter"/ 20/ Feb. '66
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)
Possibly the greatest Spider-man saga of all. Lifting the huge piece of machinery off of himself with a superhuman effort (even for a spider-man), fighting his way through Doc Ock's henchmen on determination alone, and finally delivering the serum to Dr. Connors, Spidey was at his best. Dr. Connors experiments were a success so it wasn't too long before Spider-man was delivering the final serum to the hospital. And of course, all of this was not in vain, as Aunt May did survive.

34 /"The Thrill Of The Hunt"/ 20/ March '66
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)
Kraven impersonates Spidey and hassles JJJ, so Spider-man has to fight him. Betty Brant leaves (to where, no one knows), and we see some more of Pete's new "friends" at college.



35 /"The Molten Man Regrets"/ 20/ April '66
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)
The Molten Man is released from prison. He wears a disguise and starts to rob jewelry stores. Spidey catches him in the act and takes pictures of it. Then after defeating Molty, he turns the pictures over as evidence to the police. Pete finds out Betty has left and he thinks she has eloped with Ned Leeds.

36 /"When Falls The Meteor"/ 20/ May '66
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)
Norman Fester, a demented nobody, gains some powers from meteor gas, and decides to devote his life to crime, so he becomes the Looter. Spidey defeats him; fight scenes include a museum and while attached to a balloon. Gwen thinks Pete's a coward (he had to change to Spidey, ya see--Shades of CLARK KENT!!)

37 /"Once Upon A Time There Was A Robot" / 20/ June '66
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)
Prof. Stromm constructs a couple of robots to get his revenge on his former partner, Norman Osborne. Spiderman intervenes. Foswell's underworld character, Patch is featured prominently.

38 /"Just A Guy Named Joe"/ 20/ July '66
Lee Ditko Ditko (plot by Ditko)
The villain (?) is a man after Peter Parker's heart--a born loser. Just a guy named Joe Smith, who while playing a stand-in role in a movie is given super-strength through an accident. At the end of the story, though, he loses his strength and is given a long-term contract by the studio. Leeds and Parker are at it again. Norman Osborne pays some hoods to get rid of Spider-man. Pete just misses seeing Mary Jane.

SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL
1 /"The Sinister Six"/ 41/ 1964
Lee Ditko Ditko
The Sinister Six are Doctor Octopus, Sandman, Electro, Kraven, the Vulture, and Mysterio. They kidnap Betty (and accidentally Aunt May, little realizing how much she means to Spidey) in order to make sure Spidey will fight them. Pete has a fight with Flash, but no punches are landed, and skips school when he thinks he's losing his powers. He defeats his foes one by one and rescues the two most important women in his life (until Gwen came along). Betty gets to know Pete's aunt better.

2 /"The Wondrous World Of Dr. Strange" / 20/ 1965
Lee Ditko Ditko
The Master of the Mystic Arts guest stars. Dr. Strange and Spider-man..... by Ditko! And in the same mag!! Its action and black magic all the way through, there are no sub-plots at all.

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A Mini-Interview with John Romita

Following is a very short interview with former Spider-man artist John Romita. As Larry put it, "I sent him a few brief questions--and he sent me a few brief answers!" Read on...

GV: How about giving us a brief outline of your comic book work? What was the first book you illustrated, anyway?

John: The first story I ever did was a romance story for Famous Funnies.

GV: When you came back to Marvel in 1965 (Interviewer's note: He worked for Atlas in the 50's), I heard that you had a bit of trouble adapting to Marvel's artist-writer policy (art first, then the script). Tell us about this.

John: I didn't think I could do it, but in a short time I found that I could and that I enjoyed it more.

GV: During your stay on "The Amazing Spider-man", how much did you contribute to the storylines?

John: It was a team effort where Stan and I would get together and discuss the storyline and try to come up with something we thought the fans would like.

GV: What do you believe to be your best comic work?

John: Daredevil and Capt. America.

GV: Are there any other artists that you've admired at one time or another?

John: Jack Kirby, John Buscema, Gene Colan, and last but not least, Milton Caniff.

* * continued on next page * *

ROMITA INTERVIEW....cont. from last page.

GV: In your relatively new position as art director at Marvel--what exactly do you do?

John: The primary assignment is covers. Then I try to instill the Marvel approach to comics in our artists. Designing new characters is another. I'm in charge of corrections on incoming artwork. It goes on and on.

GV: Do you have any projects in mind for the future?

John: Not that I can say at this time.

GV: Could you give us a few details on your background? Where you were born, etc.

John: Once upon a time, in the magical kingdom of Brooklyn, many years ago (1930, to be exact!), a young prince was born. At an early age, he began drawing and soon had drawn his way into the High School of Industrial Art (now the School of Art and Design). Although he had always loved comic books, he now set his sights at commercial art--magazine illustration such as done by Robert Fawcett, Noel Sickles, and Austin Briggs. Johnny Romita soon found his love in comics getting in the way, so he "plunged into it, temporarily. That was nineteen years ago...

Our hero had gone to the fabled Atlas Comics building (known to contemporaries as "Marvel") and shown his might. Ye editor, one Stan Lee, gave him a mystery story to pencil and the rest is legend. For nonescore and seven years after, both the sun and the moon found our prince bent low over his drawing board. From 1950 on, including two years in the Army doing recruiting posters, he rendered every feasible type of story: mystery, science-fiction, war, romance, jungles, westerns, and he even put to parchment the fables of a mighty red-white-and-blue hero known as Captain America. ('52-3). In 1957, however, he drifted over to a certain Devilish Competitor where he drew romance comics for eight years. The fans of his kingdom wondered if he hadn't committed some horrendous crime...such as daubing ink with one of Stan's cigars. Perhaps we'll never know.

In 1965 he recieved a reprieve and returned to the wonderful world of Marvel madness by inking an Avengers. Then it was Daredevil to which he lent his princely touch... then fill-ins on Hulk and Captain America. And soon, the friendly neighborhood SPIDER-MAN.

His princess, Virginia, and his two princelets--Vic and John--now are a constant source of inspiration in those long hours at the drawing board when affairs of state press heavily upon him.

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Not much space here so I'd just like to thank you all for buying this issue, and to remind you to write an LOC if you have the time. And now the contribution information...

1) Possible full-pagers should be done no larger than 7½" x 12". The best size for 'spot' illoes is 3½" x 5".
2) Please don't use 'wash'; if you want grey shading please use zip-a-tone or some other mechanical process.
3) Don't do a cover until you've gotten in touch with me and we've discussed it.
4) It's best to get in touch with me before submitting any written work.
5) If you want anything back, please include ample return postage.

Well, I guess that's everything. Thanks again for ordering this ish... and watch TBG for ads concerning future issues. All for now....

Chris 8/7/75

FANTASTICOMMENTS

by SCOTT PAAUW

It's been about five years now since the first issue of CONAN made its way onto the comics scene, and in that time, we of fandom have had the experience of watching a single comic grow into the largest trend since the super-hero. We have had sword and sorcery heroes from Marvel (CONAN, KULL, etc.), Atlas (WULF, IRON JAW), and the rest of the major companies, including, at last, DC, with its new barbarian, Claw. Fandom has followed right along faithfully, as has the underground industry. In this article, however, I am concerned with only three efforts in the sword and sorcery genre: DC's CLAW, Peter Laird's BARBARIC FANTASY, and Sanho Kim's SWORD'S EDGE.

The first thing one notices when observing the cover of CLAW #1 is that the hero looks exactly like Conan with his hair parted on the side. Claw is a very average sword and sorcery hero, employing every cliche imaginable in the stories. Nevertheless, in the first two issues of CLAW, the stories have been enjoyable on top of being readable (which alone is hard enough for a s&s comic). The first issue featured a very attractive cover, by Claw artist Ernie Chua. This was a good cover for a premiere issue, since I'm sure it attracted readers. The writing, by David Michelinie, while rather unoriginal was still tight and professional. As an origin issue, it ranks an average rating, not bad, but certainly not outstanding. Each of the first two issues has featured that regular of any sword and sorcery comic, the fearful, multi-headed creature spawned from hell which almost invariably has an unpronounceable name filled with consonants so rarely used that they must be the delight of any letterer who has lots of left-over rub-on lettering.

Now for the big surprise...I like Claw. Despite its cliche-ridden plots, the writing is good, and the art can't be beaten. I sincerely think that CLAW is a better comic than CONAN or any other s&s competition, however weakly concieved it may appear to be. It has two very talented people working on it, and I think it has a good chance for success.

The second item I'd like to consider here is a relatively new fanzine...Peter Laird's BARBARIC FANTASY. It is a comic strip, complete, written, drawn, and published by Laird. As an initial effort, it is quite impressive. Like most writers of sword and sorcery, Laird uses the standard cliches—story opens as stranger confronts barabrian. Both set out for common goal—stranger in search of his father, and barbarian in search of loot. Of course, they meet up with our friend, the slithering hell-spawned monster mentioned earlier, and after it engulfs Ton-ra, the barbar-

ian's companion (formerly the stranger), the barbarian slays it, causing the magnificent palace to collapse, burying the potential booty. Of course, our barbarian escapes, and is ready for further adventures. The art, while crudely inked, is very nice, and the layout and panel breakdown is very good for an amateur. I might even go so far as to say that this is a good 'zine to have in one's collection. It's available for only 50¢ (for 20 offset pages), from Peter Laird; 1599 Massachusetts Ave.; North Adams, Mass.; 01247. (Be sure to mention GV and Fantasticomments when ordering.)

The third and last effort in this category that I am going to talk about is by far the best. It is in a class all by itself. I am speaking of Sanho Kim's SWORD'S EDGE. This sort of an oriental sword and sorcery story taking place in ancient Korea. Whereas CLAW is a comic book, and BARBARIC FANTASY is a fan comic, SWORDS EDGE treads a middle ground...Kim is a professional artist, and SWORDS EDGEis a professional book, it is also an independent venture. The publishers, Iron Horse Publishing Company, are doing this as a treat for fandom rather than a financial venture. Iron Horse is actually Sanho Kim himself and his co-conspirator, Mike Julior. The name Iron Horse comes from the Korean translation of Julior's first name. Michael. Julior, although he gets minimal credit, is the principal writer for SWORD'S EDGE.

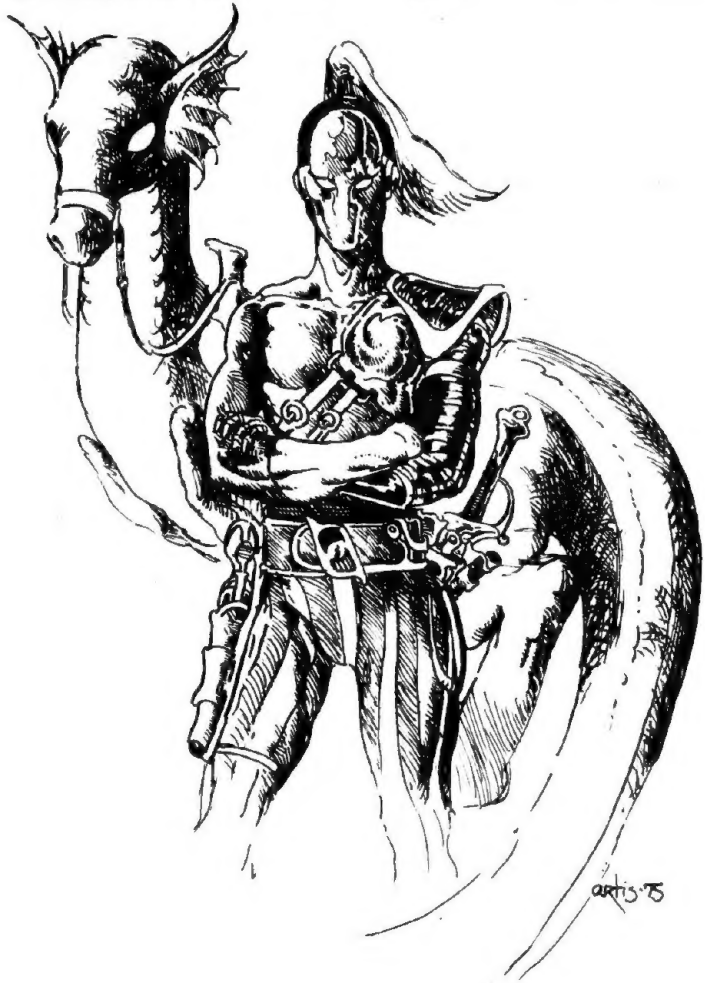
GK/TAC

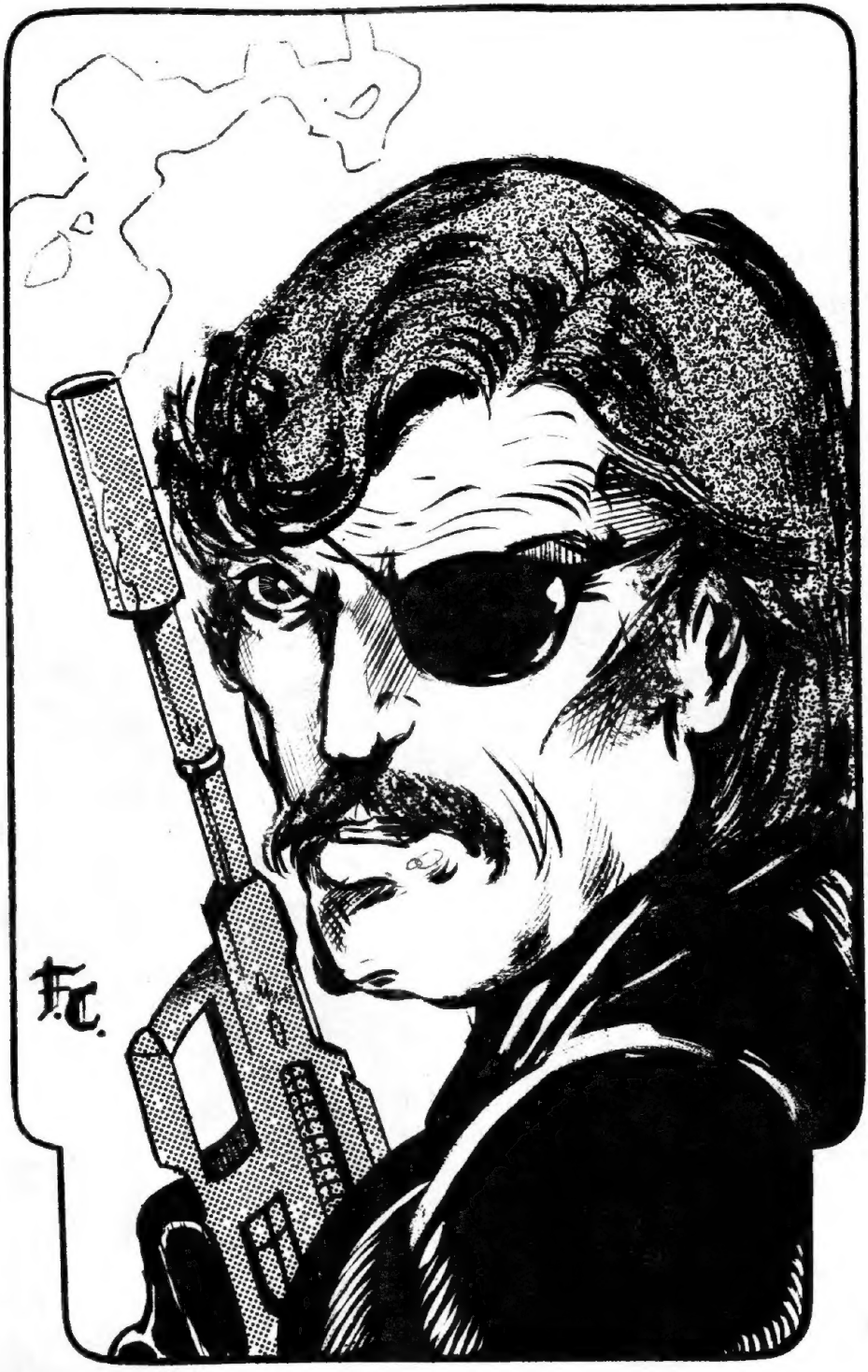
The book itself is excellent. The plot, pacing, scripting, layout, art, and inking are all truly first-rate, and worthy of any professional comic (better than any I can think of.) The story is free from cliches, and moves along freely and smoothly, employing a little sex and violence, but not too much. It is very well-written, and I don't think anyone could disagree upon reading it.

The art is also dynamic, some of the backgrounds, perticularly on the splash pages, are absolutely incredible, done in a wash, and employ some of the finer aspects of oriental brushwork. Sanho Kim is an excellent graphic storyteller, and the art never drags, although the writing is such that it would never let it.

SWORD'S EDGE is something no comic fan (or anyone, for that matter) should be without. It costs only $1.50 for 100 pages of comic story in a beautiful paperback binding. Copies are available from myself for $1.50. Scott Paauw; 20279 Douglas Ct.; Birmingham, Mich.; 48010.

It should be interesting to see how each of these new ventures into the sword and sorcery field fares, for as I write this, CLAW is on its second issue, and BARBARIC FANTASY and SWORD'S EDGE have one issue under their belts. I think each has a good amount of promise.

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